Political Science 338: Policy Analysis

Spring, 2018
Professor Stein
Room: TBA
Tue./Thurs. 9:25-10:40AM
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Course overview and goals

This course has two goals. First, to provide the student with an overview of actors, institutions and processes involved in the U.S. policymaking process at the local, state and national level. The second goal is to provide the student with a set of skills with which to analyze the formation, implementation and evaluation of public policies.

Required texts and reading:**

David Weimer and Aidan Vining, *Policy Analysis* 4th or higher edition

**Shahidur R. Khandker, Gayatri B. Koolwal and Hussain A. Samad, *Handbook on Impact Evaluation*, World Bank

Houston Chronicle (Daily)

Wall Street Journal or New York Times (Daily)

** Readings on the course Canvass website

Assignments:

[1] Legislative analysis memo (25%) due February 7

A two (2) page single spaced memo to a selected member of the 89th Texas Legislature (either House of Senate) on a selected bill introduced to the 89th Texas Legislature. The memo should make a specific recommendation to support or oppose the proposed legislation and provide reasons for your recommendation.

Bills introduced to the 89th Texas Legislator can be found at:

https://legiscan.com/TX/legislation?status=introduced.

Information on legislators can be found at their websites and at https://www.tribtalk.org/2017/11/20/the-2017-texas-house-senate-from-left-to-right-post-special-session-edition/

[2] Interest group advocacy memo (25%) due March 1

Choose a major stakeholder involved in the policy proposal discussed in the first assignment and write two (2) page single space memo to the legislator in the first assignment advocating for or against the proposed legislation. Your memo can include suggested amendments and changes in the proposed legislation.

[3] Analysis of policy evaluation report (25%) due April 12

Select form the list of policy evaluations one to critique and revise.

[4] Research design memo for evaluating a public policy enactment or proposal (25%) due May 1.

Course schedule

PART 1: THE LEGISLATIVE POLICY MAKING PROCESS

January 8

Course goals and assignments
Selection of a proposed public policy
Selection of a state legislator

Readings:

https://legiscan.com/TX/legislation?status=introduced.
https://www.tribtalk.org/2017/11/20/the-2017-texas-house-senate-from-left-to-right-post-special-session-edition/

January 10, 15, 17, 22

Why public policy

Policy types
Market failures
Functional assignment

Readings:
*Weimer and Vining, Chapters 4-9
** Charles Tiebout. 1954. "A pure theory of local expenditures." *Journal of Political Economy*. 65:416-424.
** Elinor Ostrom .1998. "A behavioral approach to the rational choice theory of collective action: Presidential Address, American Political Science Association, 1997," *American Political Science Review* 92:1-22.

**Kevin Arceneaux and Robert M. Stein. 2006. “Who is held responsible when disaster strikes? The attribution of responsibility of a natural disaster in an urban election.” *Journal of Urban Affairs*. 28:43053.

January 22, 24, 29, 31, Feb 5

Policy making process
Policy subsystems
Punctuated equilibrium theory
The electoral connection
Policy feedback

Readings:

**Bryan Jones and Frank Baumgartner. 2012. “From there to here: Punctuated Equilibrium to the General Punctuation Thesis to a Theory of Government Information Processing,” *The Policy Studies Journal* 40(1,2012):1-1.
**Keith Hamm. 1986. “The role of ‘subgovernments’ in U.S. State Policy Making: An Exploratory Analysis,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 11:321-351.
**Robert M. Stein and Kenneth N. Bickers. 1994. “Universalism and the Electoral Connection: A Test and Some Doubts,” *Political Research Quarterly* 47:295-317
**Burstein, Paul. 2003. “The Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy: A Review and an Agenda.” *Political Research Quarterly* 56(1): 29-40.
**Christopher Wlezien. 1995. "The Public as Thermostat: Dynamics of Preferences for Spending." American Journal of Political Science 39:981-1000.
**Suzanne Mettler. 2002. “Bringing the state back into civic engagement: Policy Feedback Effects of the G.I. Bill for World War II Veterans.” *American Political Science Review* 95:351-365.

FIRST MEMO DUE FEBRUARY 7

PART 2: THE NON-LEGISLATIVE PROCESS OF POLICY MAKING

February 11, 13, 19

Policy implementation
Interest groups

Readings:

**Sabatier, P.A. and D. Mazmanian. 1979. “The conditions of effective implementation: A guide to accomplishing policy objectives.” *Policy Analysis* 5(4)481-504
** Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram. 1990. “Behavioral assumptions of policy tools,” *Journal of Politics* 52:510-529
**Jack Walker. 1983. “The Origins and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America.” *American Political Science Review*. 77:390-406.

** Sarah Anzia. 2018. “When does a group of citizens influence policy? *Journal of Politics* forthcoming

February 21, 26, 28

Principal-Agency Theory
Executive policymaking
Bureaucracy
Oversight

**Kenneth Mayer. 1999. “Executive orders and Presidential power.” *Journal of Politics* 61:445-466.
** Terry Moe. 1984. “The New Economics of Organization.” *American Journal of Political Science.* 28: 739- 777.
**Mathew McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols vs. Fire Alarms. *American Journal of Political Science*. 28: 165-179.
**Kathleen Bawn. 1997. “Choosing strategies to control the bureaucracy,” *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*. 13:1010-126.

SECOND POLICY MEMO DUE MARCH 1

PART 3: ASSESSING PUBLIC POLICIES

March 5, 7

Qualitative evaluation
Quantitative evaluation
Evidence based evaluation
Policy intent
Research designs

Readings:

Weimer and Vining, Chapters, 8-13
**“What is a Research Design?”
**“Steps for Successful Policy Analysis”
Khandker et al, Chapter 2: Basic Issues of Evaluation

March 19, 21

Experiments
Validity and reliability
Propensity matching
Difference-in-difference

Readings:

Khandker et al, Chapter 3-5
**Campbell and Stanley, *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*
**Gerber, Alan S. & Donald P. Green. 2000. "The Effect of Nonpartisan Get-Out-the Vote Drive: An Experimental Study of Leafletting." *Journal of Politics* 462 (3):
**Andrew Menger and Robert Stein. 2018. "Enlisting the public in facilitating election administration: A field experiment," *Public Administration Review* 78:892-903.
**Stein, Robert & Greg Vonnahme. 2008. "Engaging the Unengaged Voter: Vote Centers and Voter Turnout." *The Journal of Politics* 70 (2): 487–497

March 26,28, April 2, 4

Instrumental variables
Regression discontinuity

Readings:

Khandker et al, Chapter 6-7
**Green, Donald P. and Daniel Winik. "Estimating the Effects of Incarceration and Probation on Recidivism among Drug Offenders." In 2010. *Criminology*. 48(2): 357-387.
**David Card and Alan B. Krueger. 1994. "Minimum Wages and Employment: A Case Study of the Fast-Food Industry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania." *American Economic Review* 84:772-
**Gerber, Elizabeth and Daniel J. Hopkins. 2011. "When Mayors Matter: Estimating the Impact of Mayoral Partisanship on City Policy." *American Journal of Political Science* Vol. 55 (2): 326–339

April 9, 11

Briefing policy evaluations

Readings: [SELECT TWO TO READ AND PREPARE FOR CLASS DISCUSSION]

**Houston Parks and Recreation Department #1: Keeping parks safe for users
**Houston Public Library: Neighborhood library use
**Under wear for everyone
**City of Houston SafeClear Program: Balancing safety and congestion
**Historic Preservation
**Vote by mail elections
**Locating Women and Infant care facilities
**Blood pressure guidelines
**Algorithms and criminal justice system

*Flooding remedies in Houston

THIRD POLICY MEMO DUE APRIL 12

April 16, 18

Designing a program evaluation

Readings: [SELECT ONE POLICY, TBA]

FOURTH POLICY MEMBER DUE MAY 1